

### Does God Rejoice at the Destruction of Our Enemies?

כתיב (דברי הימים ב כ:כא) "בצאת לפני החלוצין" ואמרים "הודו לה' כי לעולם חסדו", ואמר רבי יונתן: מפני מה לא נאמר בהודאה זו "כי טוב"? לפי שאין הקדוש ברוך הוא שמח במפלתן של רשעים, דאמר רבי שמואל בר נחמן אמר רבי יונתן: ... באותה שעה בקשו מלאכי השרת לומר שירה לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא. אמר להן הקדוש ברוך הוא: מעשה ידי טובעין בים ואתם אומרים שירה לפני?  
– תלמוד בבלי מסכת סנהדרין לט:

It is written: "as they went forth [to war] ahead of the vanguard" and it then says "Praise the Lord, for His steadfast love is eternal" (Chronicles II 20:21). Rabbi Yonatan said [about this verse]: why does it not say "for it is good" [as it usually says after "Praise God"]? Because God is not happy with the downfall of evil people. This is like what Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachman said in the name of R. Yonatan: ... In that hour the angels wanted to sing a song of praise before the Holy Blessed One. The Holy Blessed One replied to them: the works of My hands are drowning in the sea, and you want to sing a song before Me?

– B. Talmud, Sanhedrin 39b

### "Pour Out Your Love"

שפך את אהבתך על הגוים אשר ידעוך ועל ממלכות אשר בשמך קוראים בגלל חסדים שהם עושים עם יעקב ומגנים על עמך ישראל מפני אוכליהם. יזכו לראות בספת בחיריך ולשמחת בשמחת גוייך.

– מתוך הגדה של פסח, מאה 16, וורמס, גרמניה

Pour out your love on the nations who have known you and on the kingdoms who call upon your name. For they show loving-kindness to the seed of Jacob, and they defend your people Israel from those who would devour them alive. May they live to see the sukkah of peace spread over your chosen ones and to participate in the joy of your nations.

– from a 16<sup>th</sup> century Haggadah manuscript found in Worms, Germany

### "Pour Out Your Wrath"

שפך את חמתך אל הגוים אשר לא ידעוך ועל ממלכות אשר בשמך לא קראו. כי אכל את יעקב ואת נהיה השמו (תה) עט:ו,ז). שפך עליהם זעמך וחרון אפך ושיגם (תה' סט:כה). תרדף באף ותשמידם מתחת שמי ה' (איכה ג:סו).

– הגדה של פסח

**"Pour out your wrath on the nations that do not know you, and upon the kingdoms that do not invoke your name, for they have devoured Jacob and desolated his home" (Psalms 79:6, 7). "Pour out your fury on them; may your blazing anger overtake them" (Psalms 69:25). "Pursue them in wrath and destroy them from under the heavens of the Lord!" (Lamentations 3:66).**

– from the Passover Haggadah

### On Human Anger

בענין הכעס והחמה:

לעולם יהא אדם קשה לכעוס ונוח לרצות, וכל מי שאינו כועס ניצול מדינה של גיהנם. אמר רבי יונתן בשם ר"ש בר נחמני כל הכועס, כל מיני פורעניות של גיהנם שולטין בו ...

לעולם ישתדל אדם לפרוש מן החמה ומן הכעס, שכל הכועס כאילו עובד ע"ז, שכך היא אומנתו של יצר הרע – היום אומר לך עשה כך, ולמחר יאמר לך עבוד ע"ז.

– אוצר המדרשים (איוונשטיין) עמוד רע

On the matter of anger and fury:

A person should always be slow to anger and easy to please; and anyone who does not get angry is saved from

### **In Medieval Europe: Destroy our Enemies!**

ומה שתיקנו לומר על כוס רביעית "שפוך חמתך על הגויים" הוא מפני כי לפי שקיימנו מצוות ארבע כוסות כנגד ארבע כוסות של פורענות שעתיד הקב"ה להשקות לאומות העולם, אנו אומרים על כוס האחרון שיגיע אותו זמן שישקה אותם ה' כוס חמתו, הוא כוס התרעלה, כדכתיב: שישי ושמחי בת אדום וכו' גם עליך תעבור כוס (איכה ד: כא). ולא עוד, אלא שעיקר גאולתנו תלויה בחורבן קרן מלכותם.

– פירוש הריטב"א על ההגדה

Regarding the custom we have established of saying over the fourth cup "Pour out your fury on the nations": since we have fulfilled the mitzvah of the four cups, which correspond to the four cups of punishment which God will one day pour out for the nations of the world, we declare over the last cup that the time will come when God will serve them the cup of his fury, the cup of poison, as it is written "Rejoice and exult, fair Edom... to you, too, the cup shall pass" (Lam. 4:21). And not only that – the essence of our redemption is dependent upon the destruction of their kingdoms.

– *from the Commentary of the Ritba on the Haggadah (13<sup>th</sup> century)*

the judgment of Gehenom. Rabbi Yonatan said in the name of R. Sh. bar Nachmani: Anyone who gets angry, many punishments from Gehenom will control him ...

A person should always try to separate himself from wrath and anger, because anyone who gets angry is compared to an idol worshiper. For this is the craftiness of the evil impulse: today it tells you to do this, and tomorrow it will tell you to worship idols.

- *Otzar Midrashim, p. 270*

### Introduction and Commentary

The text beginning "Pour Out Your Wrath" is one of the more difficult and controversial texts in the Haggadah. It is not, at first glance, one that seems directly connected to our modern lives. As we reflect on the current situation in Israel and the world, however, this text calls out for discussion.

On one hand, the Jewish community is certainly not calling publicly for God to “pour out His wrath” on the other nations. On the other hand, relations between Jews and non-Jews seem to be at one of the low points in recent history. In this post-9/11 world, when accounts of anti-Semitism and images of the second Intifada fill the media, some Jewish communities have become increasingly wary about their relations with other religious, cultural, and ethnic groups. In light of this situation, this text is perhaps not as distant from our lives as it first seems.

### Suggested Questions for Discussion

Before discussing these questions, read the text from the Haggadah (in the center of the source sheet on the opposite side of this page), and some of the other texts on this theme.

We offer three different approaches to respond to this challenging text in a personally meaningful way: 1) Placing the text in its **historical context**, 2) **Interpreting key terms**, and 3) **Balancing conflicting and complementary ideas**.

#### ***Historical Context:***

*In order to better understand a text, it is helpful to be aware of both the situation in which the text was written as well as our own historical context. As you read each text, consider what circumstances the author might have been responding to – and how our modern situation impacts our understanding of the text.*

1. Do recent events in Israel and the world change the way you understand the “Pour Out Your Wrath” text in the Haggadah? Does the text seem less or more fitting to you now than it may have four years ago, before the onset of the recent violence in Israel and the world?
2. Share a story when you experienced anti-Zionism or anti-Semitism? Did this experience make you relate differently to another ethnic or religious group? Do you think there is any value to wishing punishment on those who persecute the Jews?

#### ***Interpreting Key Terms:***

*Sometimes our first understanding of a text is not the only possible reading. By seeking alternative interpretations of key terms, we may be able to understand the text in deeper and multiple ways.*

3. Compare the Haggadah’s “**Pour Out Your Wrath**” with the midrash “**On Human Anger.**” Are these texts contradictory or do they complement each other? Do you think it matters that one text addresses God's anger while the other addresses the anger of human beings?
4. Share an incident when someone made you angry and you were proud of the way you responded. What do you think is the appropriate role for anger in our lives?

#### ***Balancing Conflicting and Complementary Ideas:***

*By comparing a text that we find difficult with one that expresses an alternative approach, it may become easier - or harder - to understand or identify with the first text.*

5. Read the text entitled “**Pour Out Your Love.**” Does this text affect your reading of “**Pour Out Your Wrath**”?
6. Is there a place for both “pouring out wrath” and “pouring out love” in our personal and communal relationships with other peoples? Which sentiments are valuable to your celebration of Passover this year?